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THESSALONIKI DURING THE OTTOMAN OCCUPATION

Introduction

A lot is written about the history of Thessaloniki and its monuments, and there is much yet to be written about the city, which has already enjoyed a continuous life of 2,300 years, presenting many different forms of building, politics, culture, and society under many masters. It has much to offer the scholars who study it. Even today, there remains a considerable number of historical issues requiring further research.

The information presented here is drawn largely from primary sources that I have had in hand for nearly three decades, while I served as Director of the Historical Archives of Macedonia in Thessaloniki. The most important of these sources were the approximately 350 records of the Ottoman Judges (*kadis*), dating from ca. 1690 to 1912, consisting of thousands of documents of varied content. Land, taxation and *vakif* (pious endowments) registers (registries) also provide abundant valuable information. From among the large number of secondary sources employed, I would like to single out my teacher Apostolos Vakalopoulos, who urged me to learn Turkish and pursue Turkish studies.

I also walked the city many times while writing my book on the topography of Thessaloniki, thus noting many details remaining from the period of Ottoman rule until at least two decades ago, and I noted and photographed many of these, as one may ascertain by reading the *Topography* and strolling about the city.

An apt description of Thessaloniki during the approximately five centuries under Ottoman rule is that of a “multinational” city. There were three dominant nationalities, which together composed the majority of its population: Jews, Turks, and Greeks. In addition, there were many others that were counted as part of one or another group, and distinguished on the basis of their religion:

Albanians, Arabs, and Jews who had converted to Islam were grouped with the Turks; Vlachs and those of Slavic descent with the Greeks, and Jews from various European countries, with their particular languages and customs, all composed a colorful and multilingual crowd. Together with these groups coexisted a small number of Europeans – from France, England, Italy, and Malta – who exerted a significant economic influence on the life of the city.

It would be interesting to take a closer look at how all these different nationalities lived and functioned within the city walls. We probably know a great deal more about the life of the ancient Greeks in the age of Pericles than about how our own grandfathers lived two or three generations ago. It is a rather common misconception that the Ottoman occupation was an era without changes from beginning to end, and people extrapolate the way of life from its final years, which are the best known, back to the 15th century. The rate of change was certainly much slower than what it is today, but it would be incorrect to believe that nothing changed for 500 years.

Historical framework

Turkish warriors first appeared outside the city walls around 1372. These were marauders following the famous Gazi Evrenos Bey. They played an important role in the sieges of Thessaloniki, settling at Giannitsa and surrounding villages. The city's inhabitants, blockaded for five years and with no assistance from the Byzantine state, were compelled to surrender with terms to the Ottoman forces in 1387. They paid the capitulation tax, a Turkish garrison was installed in the city, and the Acheiropoitos Church was converted to a mosque.

Ottoman benevolence did not last long. According to the Byzantine historian Doukas, in 1394 Sultan Bayezid I “seized Thessaloniki and the villages around it.” Probably this “seized” meant that Bayezid applied to the region of Thessaloniki the Ottoman policy of complete subjugation, doing away with various privileges and imposing the feudal system. No contemporary historian mentions a second siege and the sacking of the city that would normally follow.

In the *Homilies* of Isidore, Archbishop of Thessaloniki during that period, there are references that lead to the conclusion that a fair number of the churches in the city had been confiscated by the Turks, and that new taxes had been imposed, among them the tribute of children (Gk. *paidomazoma*), a rather new Ottoman institution at the time.

During the first decades of the 15th century, Thessaloniki became Byzantine once again for a brief time. At the Battle of Ankara in 1402, Bayezid I was defeated by Tamerlane, and fell into his

hands as a prisoner of war; the Ottoman state was then divided among Bayezid's sons, who immediately engaged in civil war. In 1403 one of these sons, Suleiman, who had gained control of the Ottoman regions in Europe, returned Thessaloniki and some of its surrounding areas to Emperor Manuel II, in order to secure Byzantine alliance. During this period, the city suffered a great deal. It was twice besieged, in 1412 and 1416, and began paying a heavy poll tax. Evrenos Bey's warriors engaged in constant raids, and the city's inhabitants did not dare to emerge from its walls, not even to bury their dead. Hunger and insecurity compelled many to abandon the city. Seeing that he could no longer defend it, in 1423 its governor, Andronikos, surrendered the city to the Venetians. Their harsh stance towards the Orthodox residents, and the inadequate measures they took to deal with the Turkish threat, led the inhabitants once more to flee, and Thessaloniki remained nearly deserted.

The end of this period of unrest came on March 29, 1430. After a siege of only a few days, Sultan Murad II took the city by storm, followed by a two-day sack. Any remaining inhabitants were either killed or enslaved. On the third day, the Sultan entered the city and prayed at Acheiropoiitos, which once again became a mosque.

The revival of the city under Ottoman rule

The Sultan attempted to bring the city back to life; after so many disastrous adventures, it lay deserted and in ruins. It was also necessary for him to turn it into an Islamic city to enable the settlement of Muslims. Ioannis Anagnostis, eyewitness to the events, states that Murad II bought back and freed many prisoners of war, and urged his officers to do the same; he repaired the city walls and towers, and offered residences, monasteries, and churches to many who wished to return. In addition, 1,000 residents of Giannitsa were forced to relocate to Thessaloniki, while tax exemptions were granted to all who settled in the city.

The transformation of Thessaloniki into an Islamic city was not difficult. First of all, mosques, required for the prayers of the faithful, were necessary. The city had been taken by storm, and according to Islamic principles all its churches had been confiscated and could easily be turned into Islamic precincts. Some were returned to Christians, given that there were not many Turks in the town and they did not need many mosques, but these were repossessed when the Turkish population increased: in 1492, they took Saint Demetrius; in 1500, Saint Panteleimon, and in 1510, Saint Aikaterini. Between 1520-1523, the Church of the Apostles (Saint Apostoloi) was turned into another mosque. In 1525, Saint Sophia became a mosque, and the Rotunda was converted in 1590; at that time it was serving as the cathedral of Thessaloniki and was known as the Church of the

Angels (Angeloi).

Churches and monasteries

Only a few small churches belonging to Mt. Athos monasteries, which had surrendered shortly before the city's occupation, remained Christian: Panagia Dexia (known at that time as the Church of Saint Ypatios), Ypapanti, Panagouda, Saint Athanassios, Saint Nikolaos, Saint Minas, and a few others. They were all situated in large courtyards, surrounded by houses and without bell-towers, so as not to attract the attention of Muslims and run the risk of becoming the target of religious fanaticism. All were renovated and expanded in the 19th century, something strictly forbidden up to that time. The city's population used them as parish churches up until the end of Ottoman rule.

From among the numerous Byzantine monasteries in the city, only a very few continued to exist following its conquest. The only one that managed to survive throughout the entire period of Ottoman rule was Vlatadon, also known as “Tsaous Monastir”.

Mosques and convents (*tekke*)

There was a large number of mosques in Thessaloniki; thirty-eight are recorded, whose minarets gave the impression of a forest to anyone approaching the city from the sea. There were also another forty-nine small neighborhood mosques, without minarets. With schools and *medreses* attached to them, mosques were centers of Muslim religious life and education, as well as of social life, as all Muslims gathered there to receive news and learn about new government regulations, or to discuss the city's problems. Today only three mosques built by the Turks remain: that of Hamza Bey on Egnatia Street in front of the Caravan-Serai, the covered courtyard of which housed for years the Alcazar cinema; Alatza Imaret in the upper city, which took its name from its multi-colored minaret and its poor-house; and Geni Tzami/(New Mosque), built in 1902 by the Dönme, Jewish converts to Islam; this is today known as the “Old Archaeological Museum”.

An important role in Muslim life was also played by the *tekke*, the religious foundations where dervishes lived. They were much closer to the everyday people compared to the educated *ulemas*, who oversaw the mosques, the judicial system, and education. It was the dervishes from whom both rich and poor sought advice or a cure for an illness, either with holy water, or with a blessing from the grave of some Muslim saint the *tekke* held, or through spells and prayers offered by the head of a *tekke*, the *sheikh*. There was a large number of *tekke* in Thessaloniki; nearly every neighborhood had at least one. The most famous were that of the Bektashi dervishes, with which the Janissaries were affiliated, and that of the Mevlevi, the whirling dervishes. The latter, which was the city's

largest and most famous, was located outside its walls at a site renowned for its beauty, where the western extension of Aghiou Dimitriou Street ended.

Baths

The Turks also need baths, essential for the purification of believers before prayer. Using materials from Byzantine buildings, Murad made sure to build the first Turkish baths in the city at a central location. They were named the *Bey Hammami*, the “Baths of Bey”, because he had not yet acquired the title of Sultan; rather, he still retained this old Turkish title. These are the baths known to all today as the “Paradise Baths” (Gk. *Loutra Paradeisos*), the city’s oldest Turkish monument.

Neighborhoods

For many years the Turkish and Greek populations lived in the same areas, “co-mingled” as Ioannis Anagnostis writes. In the population census of 1478, about fifty years after the city’s fall, the Turks comprised twenty-seven small groups, each with its own mosque, residing in 9 neighborhoods that still retained their Byzantine names, e.g., Hippodromiou, Aghias Pelagias, Chrysi, Asomaton, Omphalou, and Kataphygis. Christians lived in these same neighborhoods; there were 4,000 Turks, and 6,000 Christians. The city’s few Greek-speaking Jews, the Romaniotes, had been transported to Constantinople after 1453; they must have returned to Thessaloniki when from 1492 onward and throughout the entire 16th century great numbers of Jews, who found refuge in the Ottoman Empire upon their expulsion from Spain, Italy and central Europe, settled in the city.

The settlement of these Jews in Thessaloniki not only altered the character of the city, but also greatly encouraged its commercial and industrial development. The Jews brought with them technical skills unfamiliar in the East. For many years they had undertaken the making of felt used for the Janissaries’ uniforms, thus earning wealth and many privileges. They comprised the largest and most powerful single group of Jews in Europe during the 16th century, and Thessaloniki became the center of Judaism: the school and large library founded in the area where Kapani is located today, known as the Talmud-Tora, was a center of Judaic studies famed throughout Europe. The city’s Rabbinate was also located there.

Around 1525, Christians were living in ten neighborhoods, all with their Byzantine names, and Turks in thirty-eight. The number of Turks and Greeks was nearly equal, about 8,000 and 9,000 respectively. The Jewish population is estimated to have been about 15,000 at that time, but we do not have precise data.

The city’s population slowly began to be limited to particular areas, and to form separate

residential districts. The Turks abandoned the flat, lower districts of the city and occupied its more elevated parts, on the acropolis and in the modern-day upper city, for reasons of security and hygiene. Many previously uninhabited areas filled with houses, though without any town planning. Turkish houses were usually two-storied and faced towards the sea. The Greeks lived largely in the eastern part of the city, along the length of the modern Egnatia Street, and even in neighborhoods whose churches had become mosques, such as Acheiropoiitos. One neighborhood, Chrysi, was located near the western walls, but from the time its church, Saint Aikaterini, became a mosque, its residents worshipped at Saint Minas, which had no other congregation, situated as it was in the city's marketplace. Several neighborhoods retained their Byzantine names, and many of the residents' names were of Byzantine origin.

The number of Jews in the city increased significantly. Their neighborhoods occupied the city center, with some in the market area, stretching from the wall along the coast up to Egnatia. Only the Dönme, the Jewish converts to Islam, were settled between the two communities, in the area of modern-day Dikastiriou Square, between the Roman Agora and extending up to Egnatia. Jewish houses were usually located in the least healthy part of the city, built around a central courtyard, without water or hygienic installations. The number of their synagogues had increased, and most were named after the regions from where the Jews who built them had come: Pulia (from Apulia, in Italy), Aragon, Castille, Portugal, and others.

Obstacles to the city's development

There were three major obstacles to the city's further development: fires, earthquakes, and the plague. Houses were built one next to another, mainly of wood; streets were narrow, and there was no fire department. It was enough for just one fire to break out somewhere for a large part of the city to be reduced to ashes. The plague and other infectious diseases, primarily cholera and typhus, were easily spread without any possibility for dealing with them and containing them in a densely-populated city that was visited each year by a large number of ships, and where there were no hygiene measures taken.

Fires

There is a considerable amount of information in the reports sent home by the Venetian consuls, a large number of them translated by Konstantinos Mertzios. In 1510, a fire destroyed 1,800 houses and part of the marketplace. The city suffered during the 16th, 17th, and 18th centuries, and residents were in a dreadful state, stricken by one disaster after another. In 1530, the plague compelled the

city's inhabitants to desert it. In 1545, a fire reduced to ashes 5,000 houses, 18 synagogues and many Jewish libraries and schools. In that same year, the plague struck: more than 7,000 Jews died and the rest of the population sought refuge in surrounding villages. In 1620, the city burned almost entirely, and many Jews left and settled elsewhere. The city remained deserted for almost two years, and required quite a number of years to be rebuilt.

The plague and earthquakes

The plague appeared frequently during the 17th century. During the same period, the decline of trade in the eastern Mediterranean had repercussions in Thessaloniki: thousands of Jews abandoned the city at that time, seeking refuge in Italy's large port cities. In 1756, a major earthquake that lasted for 50 days compelled many to abandon their city. The plague had by then become endemic; during the summers, the number of the dead increased dramatically, and those who could departed for surrounding villages.

Demography

The city's population normally fluctuated around 20,000, but the numbers provided differ significantly. In the 18th century, it is reckoned that there were between 8,000 and 9,000 Greeks, between 10,000 and 17,000 Turks, and from 18,000 to 27,000 Jews. In 1830, the Jews made up 44%, the Muslims 34%, and the Christians 22% of the total population. This decimated population was filled out by inhabitants from surrounding villages and other, more distant regions, who came to settle in the city to avoid the terrible oppression they were subjected to in their villages, in the hope of finding better living conditions.

Taxation

Until the mid-19th century the city was bounded by its walls, from modern-day Syntivani Square to the Vardaris Gate, and from the sea up to Vlatadon Monastery. Each of its neighborhoods comprised a separate taxation base-unit. The taxes owed each year by the city were determined by the capital. The notables gathered in the office of the *kadi* and calculated the amount that would fall to each community. Disputes were common: Jews and Greeks attempted to demonstrate that they were not in a position to pay the amount requested of them. At times the Jews, though far more numerous than Christians, paid less by reason of their poverty. The communities then determined the amount each neighborhood owed. For this reason, moving from one neighborhood to another was not easy, for the other residents of the neighborhood would be burdened with the share of those who had moved. There were also quarrels between neighborhoods. The monasteries of Mt. Athos

all had lodgings within the city where the monks stayed, which refused to pay their share of taxes, basing their arguments on the exemptions they had ensured. Residents pressed them to participate in assuming tax burdens, and the monasteries resorted to the capital in order to obtain *firmons* that granted them exemption.

Administration

Administratively, Thessaloniki was far from the borders of the empire, in a region that was quiet and prosperous in relation to others. Until the 19th century it comprised a *sanjak*, i.e. a district, which was subject to the Beylerbey, the General Administrator of Roumeli, i.e. the Balkans. The position of *sanjakkbey* of Thessaloniki, the military and political governor of the city, was among the most sought-after posts. Together with the region of Kavala, it was often given to elderly viziers. One of these, Numan Pasha, who had been born in Thessaloniki, built a mosque, orphanage, and school near the eastern wall of the city with money he had wrung from the inhabitants. The Venetian consul writes that when Numan died at the age of 105 in 1756, everyone breathed a sigh of relief.

Governors arrived in the city with a military corps made up of hundreds of irregulars whom they had to maintain from their income, i.e., from the taxes they imposed on the inhabitants, above and beyond state taxation. When they arrived, they demanded a “welcome” bonus. Every six months, they asked the inhabitants to pay for new uniforms and shoes for the soldiers. On holidays they asked for gifts for themselves and their soldiers. And when they were appointed to another position, they asked for the expenses associated with their departure. These changes usually occurred on a yearly basis, but sometimes were more frequent. One year, there were four changes of governor, with corresponding additional costs for the city’s inhabitants.

The position of *kadi* of Thessaloniki was also an important one. Apart from his judicial function, he also controlled all state services, even that of the governor. All the Sultan’s orders passed through his office, to be recorded in his registries so that he could control their implementation. The same occurred with the distribution and collection of taxes. The *kadi* even held the post of notary public, since all purchases and sales occurred with documents provided by him. These and many other prerogatives fell within his jurisdiction, making him the most important personage in the administration of a city and its territory.

However, within the city the most powerful men were the local Janissaries, numbering between about two and seven thousand. During the 18th century, they did as they pleased: they terrorized the

inhabitants, looted homes and shops, and killed anyone who opposed them. Their officers or the *pashas* who came from the capital could not impose order even if they wanted to. “There is no other law than the might of the Janissaries”, wrote the Venetian consul in 1755.

Communities

Each community had its own organization, headed by religious leaders and a council of notables; the latter represented the community, collected taxes, received loans, oversaw the schools, hospitals, and churches or synagogues, resolving many issues involving family and inheritance law such as marriages and divorces, as well as personal differences between community members. Christians rarely resorted to the Turkish courts for such matters as these, and the Jews never did. The Muslims did not have a corresponding organization; the *ayan*, their own notables, represented them when necessary.

Foreign nationals, the consuls of European states, employees of consulates and merchants, known as “Franks” (Gk. *Frangoi*), though relatively few in number, wielded great influence on the social and economic life of the city. They dwelt chiefly in the area around modern-day Frangon Street, known as “Frangomachalas”. A good number of Greek and Jewish interpreters and commercial agents who collaborated with them had obtained, along with foreign nationals, a *berat*, i.e., a document granting them certain privileges, and exempting them from many taxes. The result was that such individuals had many disputes with other members of their community, since their tax burden fell to the other community members. At the end of the 18th century, the total number of foreigners and their dependents was around 2,000.

Guilds

The existence of guilds, closed professional organizations to which all professionals were obliged to belong, was very significant for the economy and the social life of Thessaloniki. The guilds ruled the market: they purchased raw materials and sold them to their members; they determined the prices of goods; they exercised quality control over products, and they punished members who were disobedient. The social character of guilds was equally important: obligatory contributions by members provided the guilds with a good income, so as to make loans, support the poor and the sick, and maintain the widows and orphans of their members. They often assumed a part of the fiscal obligations of their community.

For someone to be accepted into a guild he had to be recommended by its members; normally, members would propose their own relatives. Sons followed the profession of their fathers, as it was

difficult for them to be accepted into another guild. In the beginning, one was accepted as an apprentice (*tsiraki*); following a number of years of apprenticeship, “1001 Nights” according to tradition, one became a craftsman (*kalfas*). Only when one was able to open his own shop was he accepted as a master craftsman (*usta*). Some guilds, like those that had a connection with the weaving industry, also employed women and young children.

The guild council was composed of the most senior masters, headed by a *kehagia*. His office was oftentimes transferred from father to son. Young men coming from other areas normally remained with some relative or compatriot as their assistants, and often married one of their daughters. When they became independent, they set up their household near their master. Thus, in neighborhoods there frequently lived professionals belonging to a single guild, related to one another and coming from the same region.

In the Lontza, a building near the harbor somewhere between modern day Eleftherias Square and Tsimiski Street, the central council of the guilds had its seat, which was comprised of the heads (*kehagiades*) of each guild. Many guilds had their own Lontza. Each year they held an official celebration on the name day of their patron saint, with a meal and parade of members together with the saint’s ecclesiastical banner.

A powerful sense of solidarity developed among the members of a guild. The guild was the organisation within which each member grew up and lived, and being cut off from it meant not only economic disaster, but far more important, social ostracism.

In order to open a shop or workshop, one required the permission of the guild, which allowed only a certain number of shops to operate. The state exercised control over the market through the guilds: it recruited the craftsmen it needed for military campaigns, determined prices and the circulation of goods, and controlled the city’s residents, since nearly all of them belonged to some guild. Through the guilds the government gave orders for the production of certain goods, or forbade the making of others. From 1804 onwards, it required eight guilds to provide three members each to be employed as “pump-men” (*touloubatzides*) – firefighters.

The guilds opposed state decisions when they considered them unfair, closing their shops in protest. Thus, the guild of *kataifi* (*Kadayif*)-makers refused to continue its production one year in the 18th century when the price established for *kataifi* by the state was considered too low.

Admission of Janissaries into the guilds caused many problems. With the abolition of the child levy (Gk. *paidomazoma*) at the end of the 16th century, new Janissaries came from among Muslims,

and their numbers greatly increased in all the cities. At the same time, they received permission to practice a profession. The Janissary craftsmen did not obey the guilds' commands. They sold objects of poor quality that had not passed through quality control, they did not pay their share of taxes, and it was impossible for either the guilds or the state authorities, which were powerless against them, to punish them. This state of affairs continued until 1828, when Mahmud II abolished the Janissary corps, and many of them were put to death throughout the empire.

Guilds and nationality

Quite a number of guilds are listed in the records of the *kadi* of Thessaloniki. Thus, we can see what guilds there were, and who belonged to them. In Thessaloniki, commercial and professional activity was divided among the three ethnic elements that made up the population. There were professions that had members from all three communities, and others that exercised a monopoly over one or another. For example, all of the street vendors of fish were Jews; basket-weavers were Gypsies; poultry-shop owners were Bulgarians, and horse-traders, Albanians. Felt-makers – approximately 1,000 families – were Jews until the late 18th century, but during the 19th century they were largely Christian. There was thus a professional co-mingling of various ethnic and religious groups, which created relations among them as well as conflicts of interest. Normally, however, religion kept one community isolated from another, and this preserved their social composition, customs, and mores.

From my as-yet unpublished study of the records of the *kadi* of Thessaloniki, it may be ascertained that in the mid-19th century there were between 125 and 130 guilds in the city, with 1,800 - 2,000 shops. Of these, 40% were Greek, 33% Turkish, and 27% Jewish. The Jews, although the most numerous element in the city, were not the strongest economically, while the Turks were not only military and civil servants, since they had one-third of the commercial activity in Thessaloniki in their hands.

Examining this evidence in detail, we find that of the approximately 670 food and beverage shops, half were Greek, 28% Jewish, and the remainder Turkish. The guilds of those who sold sesame seed oil and raisins were exclusively Greek; most of the bakers and distillers were of Vlach origin. Greeks also had three workshops where they produced pasta, the first such shops to be created in the city. All the fishmongers and butchers were Jews. Turks and Albanians were cooks, vendors of roasted chickpeas and halva, and sellers of a refreshing drink called *boza*.

There were also mixed guilds, having two or three ethnic groups: there were about 100 Greek

grocers, and another 100 Jewish ones. Both Greeks and Jews were pastry-makers and flour dealers. Greeks and to a somewhat lesser extent, Turks, made and sold yogurt, and were the vendors – mostly, peddlers – of *bourekia*, fruits, and barley. Cheese-makers were primarily Turks, and coffee grinders were primarily Greeks. It was only in the 19th century that Armenians settled in the city, and the profession of coffee grinder was passed on to them.

There were around 600 workshops for weaving and clothing production; of these, 300 were Greek, 200 Jewish, and 100 Turkish. The Greeks manufactured *abades*, i.e., heavy woolen fabrics, denim, cloaks, linings, furs, and calico print textiles. There were around 20 Greek tailors; another 50 came from Divri. There were also 54 Turkish tailors, and 4 Jewish ones. The Jews continued to manufacture felt, as in the past, but in much smaller quantities. They also made bobbins and threads, and sold ready-made garments. The Turks made socks, towels, and veils in 82 workshops. The 104 silk processing workshops were also Turkish. Tanners were also exclusively Turks. The Turks made coarse woolen fabric, the Greeks women's and European-style shoes, while the Jews had exclusivity in the cobblers' trade.

The Turks prevailed in the metalworking professions, with about 80 workshops. All of the blacksmiths and tinsmiths were Turks or Albanians. Turks and Jews were second-hand dealers in ironware. Jews were tinsmiths, locksmiths, and ironsmiths. Greeks were the coppersmiths, who made marvelous copper plates, large pans, and other vessels; they were also goldsmiths, painters, greengrocers, and chandlers. Jews served exclusively as moneychangers, scrap-dealers, and dealers in small wares – all of them peddlers – as well as glass-makers, vendors of tobacco and matches, soap-makers, the city's sole book-dealer, and its only public crier. Timber merchants, baths owners, and quilt-makers were exclusively Turks, and Turks made chairs, chests, boxes, and saddles.

The guild system imposed the housing of shops and workshops for each trade in a certain place, so as to facilitate their control. These places remained the same throughout nearly the entire Ottoman period. Thus, all the coppersmiths had their workshops around Panagia Chalkeon. The fish market was at the western edge of Tsimiski Street. The grain market was in Kapani, that of the wood merchants in the neighborhood of Saint Nikolaos, the silk merchants in the modern-day Chortiati stoa. Bezesten, a sturdy roofed building with iron doors at a conspicuous place in the market, covered shops with valuable merchandise, such as delicate fabrics and gold objects. The fabrics have now been replaced with calico, buttons, and ribbons; the goldsmiths have emerged to the shops along the building's external façade.

Diet and cost of living

How did Thessalonians live during this period? What did they eat? How much did their food cost? Once again, the price registries for goods sold in Thessaloniki over a number of decades in the 18th and 19th centuries provide answers to these questions. Once every six months, on the name day of Saint George and that of Saint Demetrius, or once a year, representatives of the guilds and the notables gathered in the office of the *kadi* and set prices. The data the price lists contain are indeed valuable.

First, however, let us have a look at the wages of a craftsman. During the 1840s, a carpenter received a daily wage of 4.5 - 5 piastres (*gurus*); a *guru* was 40 *paras*. (All the prices given below are converted to *paras*, in order to make calculations easier.) Thus, the carpenter received between 180 and 200 *paras*. A less expert carpenter would receive 120 to 140 *paras*, and an apprentice, 60. A builder had a daily wage of 120 to 140 *paras*, a senior apprentice 90, and a junior apprentice 60.

One *okka* of top-quality, i.e., white bread – for younger readers, we should note that an *okka* contained 400 drams, or 1, 280 grams – cost 23-25 *paras*, and common, i.e. whole wheat bread, 18-20 *paras*. However, small loaves of bread, weighing about 65 drams, viz., 200 grams, were also sold; these always cost 4 *paras* – depending on price fluctuations, the weight rose or fell. *Bogatsa* (flaky pastry) and stuffed *tsoureki* (turk. çörek: a kind of shortbread in the shape of a ring) were 90 *paras*, and *koulouria* (rolls) cost 50 *paras* per *okka*.

Lamb- and goat-meat sold for 68-72 *paras* an *okka*; prices varied from one six-month period to another. Pork and beef were not sold; beef began to appear in the price lists only after 1850.

Milk was 10-12 *paras* an *okka*, cheese 22-24, yogurt, 23 and yogurt from the *tsanaka* (an earthenware vessel), 16. Cream was 200-220 and butter 240 *paras* per *okka*.

Sesame seed oil, in use at that time in lieu of olive oil, was 150 *paras* per *okka*. An *okka* of unroasted coffee cost 260 *paras*, and roasted/ground coffee cost 390 *paras*. Its distribution was carefully controlled by the guild of coffee dealers, who purchased the quantity that was imported and then distributed it to guild members.

The products sold by a grocer were limited: cheese was slightly more expensive than that sold by shepherds, butter was 215 *paras* an *okka*, honey 84, rice 79, chickpeas 34, beans 40, black-eyed beans 24, lentils 30, broad beans 26, onions 14, and vinegar 30. Olives cost between 55 and 77 *paras*; salt cost 12.

Greengrocers sold leeks for 5 *paras* an *okka*, spinach for 8, celery for 5, beets for 5, squash for 4,

cabbage for 6, and peaches for 10. Three eggplants cost one *para*. Watermelons were 5 and melons 6 *paras* an *okka*.

White raisins, costing between 50 and 75 *paras* an *okka*, came from Karaburnu, Cesme, and Smyrna; black raisins were 40 to 44 *paras*. Raisins from Patras were cheaper, at 36 *paras*. Dried figs from Zagra were sold for 54 *paras*. Boxed figs ranged from a high of 160 to a low of 60 *paras*; those sold in bags were 35. Carobs were 18 *paras*, but those from Samos were more expensive – 32 *paras*. Shelled peanuts were 320 *paras*; ground almonds were 340. Soap from Herakleion was 240 *paras* an *okka*; that from Chania, 220, and European soap, 200. Candles, which lit residences at night, were 160-200 *paras* an *okka*.

Unbaked *Kadayif* (a kind of sweet pastry) was 38 *paras*; halva was 168, and halva made from must, 140 *paras*. Roasted chickpeas ranged from 40 to 80 *paras*, depending on quality. Confectioners sold candies, sherbets, and Turkish delight (*loukoumia*) – the Greek-made at 360 *paras*, the Jewish-made at 320 – and preserved fruits went for 160 to 240 *paras* an *okka*.

Charcoal cost 560 *paras* for 100 *okkas* when it came in boats from the sea. That brought in from surrounding regions by cart or animals was more expensive, since it was considered better; prices depended on the distance it had been transported, and its quality: 600 *paras* for that from Serres, 640 from Galatista and the surrounding villages of the Chalkidiki, and 480 for that from Hortiatis mountain. Firewood, delivered to the house, was priced in accordance with the distance it had traveled: brought from the port and the Vardaris Gate to the area of Dioikitirio, it was 20 *paras* an *okka*; when carried to the Kalamaria Gate (modern-day Syntrivani Square) it was 30, and when it was taken up to the Acropolis, it was 40.

Also noted in the lists are the prices for the covering of copper vessels in tin plate, for copper utensils, for *yemeni* (a kind of light shoe worn by peasants), boots, Turkish house slippers, coarse shoes, slippers, men's, women's, and children's shoes, all priced according to type and materials.

The prices for shoeing horses, mules, oxen, and donkeys are also provided. And there are detailed prices given for wood used in construction.

These are the products we normally find in the price-lists. Prices tended to change, and nearly everything became more costly, while wages remained stable or decreased.

Now, let us attempt to estimate whether a wage earner of that era, e.g. a carpenter, could make ends meet on his earnings of 200 *paras* a day. Of course, our results are quite arbitrary. Let us assume that, as a senior master, he would have had a family with three children, a common number

at that time. Perhaps his elderly parents lived with the family as well – of course, without a pension. And he may have had an apprentice whom he had to care for as if the boy were his own. On the other hand, his children may have worked with him as craftsmen or apprentices, and thus increased the family earnings. Or his wife and daughters may have woven at the loom, never missing from any home, and made fabrics for their clothes and coarse rugs (*kilims*) for the family, perhaps selling some. It is preferable to stick to the wages of the master, for a five-member family. We should also bear in mind that people worked six days a week in those days, and working hours were not limited to 7 or 8 a day.

Let us assume that in order to live comfortably, a family needed 1.5 *okka* of bread daily, from 20 to 30 *paras* per *okka*. On a Sunday or holiday, they would eat lamb, 1.5 *okka*: 105 *paras*, plus one-half *okka* of rice at 45 *paras*, and 50 drams of butter at 30 *paras*. The Sunday meal alone would thus cost more than 200 *paras*. For fruit, they could have had a watermelon weighing 3 *okkas*, costing 15 *paras*. For breakfast, one *okka* of milk for 10 *paras* and one-half *okka* of cheese for another 10. For coffee – a cup in the morning and afternoon for the couple – 20 *paras*. For honey in their coffee (sugar did not exist), 5 *paras*, for a total of 370 *paras*. If it was a weekday, they would eat legumes or vegetables, 10 to 40 *paras*, with 50 drams of oil for 18 *paras*, half an *okka* of onions for 7 *paras*, and half an *okka* of olives for 30 *paras*, all of which would have cost 140 to 150 *paras*.

Most people got wine, requisite at the table, from their small vineyards on the city outskirts, primarily its eastern side. In their garden, next to or behind the house, they would cultivate some vegetables, and a tree or two in the courtyard, normally a mulberry or fig tree, would yield some fruit. A chicken coop for eggs and a chicken for the table from time to time were indispensable in every household.

However, a family also needed charcoal to prepare the food in the brazier, firewood to stay warm if it was winter-time, soap for bathing and for the washing, and candles to see at night. From time to time, the children would want roasted chickpeas and raisins, and the master of the house needed tobacco to roll his cigarettes, since industrial cigarette manufacturers did not yet exist. Once in a rare while, they would have needed to buy clothes and shoes – normally, the children ran barefoot outside. If he had sons, he needed to pay his children's school for the teacher's salary and its other operational expenses, to contribute something for the maintenance of his parish church, to contribute to his guild, and pay his share of the taxes. And woe betide him if he also had to pay rent!

Our carpenter, it seems, would have had a hard time making ends meet. If he had work every day, then he would have earned 5,000 *paras* a month, i.e. 125 piastres, or 1.25 gold pounds. It is estimated that a family of five could live well on 3 gold pounds a month. Thus, he would have been on the verge of starvation without assistance from other members of his family. The same sort of poverty applied to a great majority of the city's residents.

In a study of mine on Thessaloniki during the 1830s, which is based on statistical data from a census of that era, it was found that 11.5% of the Greek residents and 5.5% of the Jewish ones belonged to the higher category of taxpayers, those who could be characterized as "wealthy"; 58.5% of the Greeks, and 20% of the Jews belonged to the middle category, those who were "comfortable"; finally, 30% of Greeks and 77% of Jews fell in the third category, those who were "poor". There were also quite a number of residents entirely without means, crippled, or elderly, and who were not taxed at all.

The wealthiest Christian neighborhoods were those of Saint Athanassios and Saint Nikolaos in the city center; the poorest were those of Lagoudiani and the Vlatadon Monastery in the upper city.

Education

A few words now concerning public foundations about which we have information.

Education was not the concern of the state; the residents themselves took care of providing schools. The Turks had schools for their children at many mosques. Teachers were paid by bequests (*vakifs*) of Muslims for philanthropic purposes, of which there were many in Thessaloniki and to which an enormous number of homes and shops belonged. Children learned by memorizing chapters from the Koran, which was written in Arabic and which children did not understand; they also learned a little writing and some arithmetic. The *madrasas*, which were also attached to mosques, were schools of higher learning. In these, classical Islamic learning was offered: study and interpretation of the Koran and of the sacred Islamic law. Students were housed and fed from the income of the *vakifs*, and were relieved of military obligations and taxes. However, they also played a leading role in many popular uprisings, chiefly when food prices increased sharply.

We do not have much information available concerning Greek schools in Thessaloniki. These too had to be maintained by the residents themselves. We know that in the second half of the 16th century a number of teachers were employed. In 1593, the Orthodox bishops decided at one of their meetings to implement measures in support of education. However, both funding and teachers were lacking. By the 18th century there was a Greek school in Thessaloniki, which in 1760 was named

the *Ellinomouseio*, and one more school. The Greek school was closed from 1821-1826; however, it was operating in 1835 in the neighborhood of Saint Athanassios, and in 1870 was turned into a Gymnasium. It burned in the fire of 1890, and a new Gymnasium was built on Egnatia Street near the Panagouda; this is still standing today. From the mid-19th century, there was also a Girls' School, a *Parthenagogeion*, equivalent to a gymnasium. The Greek schools increased in number during the final decades of the same century. At that time, there were two gymnasia, a *parthenagogeion*, two primary schools and three kindergartens in operation. Others were established in the early 20th century, including the Papafeion orphanage as well as a number of private schools.

The education of the Jews was more structured. Apart from the great school, the Talmud-Tora we referred to above, there were about 60 schools in operation in the 18th century. At the end of the Turkish occupation, there were new schools established by the Alliance Israelite, which was founded with foreign capital to assist the city's Jewish element, as well as a commercial and professional school and a girls' school.

During the final decades of the 19th century numerous foreign schools were founded with propagandistic or proselytizing aspirations: French, German, English, the American Farm School, and schools belonging to numerous Balkan states, including Bulgaria, Serbia, Rumania, and Armenia.

The baths

Within the city, apart from the large baths of Bey to which we have already made reference, other baths were built, including Yeni Hamam, the 'New Baths' above the church of Saint Demetrius (which a few years ago was being used as the Aigli cinema), the baths known as Phoinix in the western part of the city, the Jewish Baths, also called the Market Baths (which still exist today near the Flower Market, the *Louloudadika*), and others today no longer preserved. In all, there were nine; all were dedications (*vakifs*). Some of these were double baths, i.e. they had sections for both men and women, or operated only for women on certain days of the week. For women, a visit to the hamam was a real celebration. They went with their children, with food, sweets, and sherbets, and spent the entire day there with their friends. It was a social event that they could find nowhere else. There was a great deal of matchmaking arising from such opportunities where the mothers of boys could get to know prospective brides and choose one that in their opinion was suitable for their son.

Water supply

The city's water supply, always problematic, was ensured by the Byzantine aqueduct in Hortiatiss, whose main channel passed through the reservoir at Vlatadon Monastery, and by the Lebet aqueduct, which was constructed around 1524. However, water was channeled only into mosques, baths, inns, prisons, public buildings, a fair number of wealthy Turkish homes, a few Christian ones, and even fewer Jewish ones. All other residents had to fetch water from neighborhood fountains, built by Turks. Most of these were located in Turkish neighborhoods, a few in Christian ones, and only a very few in Jewish ones. Many belonged to some *vakif*, and one had to pay a small fee to the person renting the fountain in order to get water from it.

Entertainment

Life in the city offered few opportunities for entertainment and amusement. The coffee shops and restaurants provided a small break in the daily life of the male population. Opportunities for some organized form of amusement included religious holidays with their celebrations, and the holidays and communal meals of the guilds, which most often took place outside the city walls in the nearby forest of Seikh Su. The only spectacle they had was the shadow theater of Karagoz, and this was exclusively for men. It was only in the final decades of the Ottoman occupation that theaters, where foreign troupes gave performances, first appeared, together with cabarets, dance halls, and clubs.

Changes from the mid-19th century

From the mid-19th century, the situation began to change in Thessaloniki. Apart from being a large export center, the city became the second-most important import trading port for industrial European products in the Balkans after Constantinople. Slowly, the market began to be transformed, and by the end of the century it had acquired an entirely different form. Many guilds ceased to function, and their products were replaced by others, both cheaper and of better quality. New professions developed, and the first factories made their appearance. It became possible to invest large sums of capital; private banks were founded, chiefly by those who held large amounts of capital, like the Modiano and Allatini families. The Ottoman Bank and the Eastern Bank were also founded. New roads were laid out, and between 1870 and 1890, rail lines linked the city to central Europe and the capital; finally, a new harbor was built. Commerce developed in all directions, though chiefly in the direction of the great European ports. Indicatively it may be noted that while in 1836, boats entering the harbor carried a total of 25,000 tons, in 1869 this amount had risen to 243,000 tons. And the city was united to the rest of the world via telegraph and post offices. New

administrative buildings were constructed along European models: the *Dioikitirion*, today's Ministry of Macedonia and Thrace; the administrative buildings constructed along Hamidiye Boulevard (today's Ethnikis Amynis Street), and the customs at the harbor. The city spread out beyond its old walls, a large part of which were torn down. A new neighborhood, Hamidiye or Pyrgoi, developed along the seacoast east of the old city, with large mansions where the wealthiest inhabitants lived, irrespective of religion or ethnic group. West of the city, the neighborhood of Çayir, with its many inns, shops, and workshops, developed. Here was created the city's National Garden, also known as *Bes Çinar* (the Five Plane-trees), and later as the "Garden of Princes". The railroad station and many factories were also built.

During the same era the use of gas and later of electricity began, as well as the use of trams, initially horse-drawn, later powered by electricity. Thanks to the Turkish government's efforts at reform, a significant number of modern schools has operated since then: kindergartens and primary schools, gymnasia and semi-gymnasia, girls' schools, commercial schools, and the famed Idadiye, for educating candidates for the civil service, in the building where the University of Thessaloniki was housed for many years.

The nationalities that lived in the city, as we have related, created their own schools. Printing houses began to operate, and newspapers began to be published. Many musical, athletic, and philanthropic associations were formed, as well as philanthropic institutions: the Papafeion orphanage, an old people's home, and hospitals.

At the end of the Ottoman Empire, Thessaloniki finally became the administrative center of a region encompassing all of Macedonia. At the same time, it was the headquarters of a military corps from which the Young Turks' movement began, and which led to the abolition of the Ottoman Empire and the creation of the new Turkish state. The Balkan Wars of 1912-13 put an end to the Ottoman period of "Saloniki", which once again became "Thessaloniki", and the second city of the newly founded Greek state.

What remains today from that era? Two or three mosques, two or three baths, half a minaret, the Bezesten, some public buildings – and the memory of what it was. Let us preserve them as the monuments of a major period in the history of our city.

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